

Kantian Aspects

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Two parts of one core thesis:

appearances can be known

things in themselves cannot be cognised (nor, a fortiori, known), but only be thought

Three main families of theories can thus be distinguished in terms of which contrast they draw the distinction:

methodological considering things insofar as they are subject to conditions of human sensibility vs. considering things insofar as they are independent of these conditions;

phenomenalist mental vs. non-mental; only mental things can be known;

property-dualist ‘phenomenal’ properties vs. ‘noumenal’ properties; only phenomenal properties can be known.

Aspectival realism: appearances are aspects of things in themselves. An appearance, a , is a thing in itself, b , insofar as it appears: $a = b$ qua appearing. I use “qua” as a technical expression to describe the inner structure of aspects and call appearances “appearance-aspects”, and “bases” what they are aspects of: a is the appearance-aspect of b and b is its base. Kant’s two core thesis will then amount to the claim that we can know only appearance-aspects and that we can only think, not cognise, their bases:

aspectival ‘appearance’ aspects vs. their bases; only appearance aspects can be known.

	distinction	core thesis	link
methodological	ways of considering	only knowledge-under-a-description	Gestalt switch
phenomenalist	mental vs. non-mental things	only self-knowledge	representing
property-dualist	types of properties	knowledge only of how we are affected	co-exemplification
aspectival	aspect and base	knowledge only of aspects	aspect-of

Desiderata:

knowledge transmitting To know the appearance is to know, in a certain sense, that which appears.

cognitively encapsulating Information about the appearance is not information about the thing in itself.

Claims:

Aspectival knowledge Knowing that a is F is to know, of a , that it has an appearance-aspect that is F , i.e. it is to know that a appear to be F .

Knowledge of aspects Knowing that a is F is to know, of the appearance-aspect of a , that it is F , i.e. it is to know that a -as-it-appears is F .

Taking care of the idealist strand: Within the domain of the knowable, and whenever there is sensation, representing and appearing are converse relations: to say that x represents y is to say that y appears to x . Moreover, they are also correlative: what y is represented as is what y appears as. This does not mean that representation, being a different relation, ‘inherits’ its content from appearance (this would be incompatible with their being converses) – it rather means that one and the same aspect is both an aspect of the representation and an aspect of the appearance: the representing and the appearing thing share the aspect by which they are given to us. It is in this sense, I propose, that appearances *are* representations.

To speak of “ x as it appears” or “ x as represented” is ambiguous in at least three ways:

process the processes of appearing and of representing are different – they differ in their direction, and in what they are grounded in: things appear in virtue of how they are, while subjects represent in virtue of how they are and these grounds are different in the case of the representation of mind-independent matters of fact;

event the two processes may still coincide, and thus be the same event: every appearing is then also a being represented, and every representing also a being appeared to: it is in virtue of such coincidence that these events make available the same information, and reveal the same aspect of the world;

result the one event that is both adequately described as “ x appears to y as F ” and “ x is represented as F by y ” may still have two different results, and modify its two relata in two different ways: as a dancing ‘produces’ both a dancer and a dance, an event of representing/appearing produces both an appearance and a representation.